

RELATIVE ADVANTAGE: STRENGTH FOR FAVORABLE CONFLICT RESOLUTION

A Monograph

by

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ABSTRACT

RELATIVE ADVANTAGE: STRENGTH FOR FAVORABLE CONFLICT RESOLUTION, by MAJ James D. Maxwell, U.S. Army, 53 pages.

During recent years the subject of how wars end has become of greater interest within the profession of arms. Operationally and tactically, the U.S. Army looked at the problem in Iraq and Afghanistan in terms of numbers and tonnage. Closing a theater and managing force levels are mechanical actions, where commanders work to meet constraints. The true challenge for those practicing the operational art is achieving strategic goals, in part or in whole, through the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose where effects reach past the military end state. Achieving a strategic goal must enable the nation's political civilian leaders to favorably negotiate an end to the conflict. Military professionals face two challenges in looking past the military endstate. The first is understanding how strategies provide negotiating strength to allow for war termination. The second is effective communication with senior civilian leadership.

This study draws on three wars as case studies: World War II in the Pacific, the Vietnam conflict, and the 1991 Gulf War. Evaluation of operational approaches and strategies, political decisions, and the termination of each war allows for added depth to the concept of relative advantage and how it contributes to favorable conflict resolution. An evaluation of the concept of center of gravity, used both strategically and operationally, is used to evaluate the utility of the concept of relative advantage.

This study concludes that the concept of relative advantage allows commanders to apply military force in a manner that contributes to achieving political aims and support negotiating for war termination. The concept provides a heuristic where commanders can cognitively connect application of operational art to political aims and communicate how a military strategic goal, when achieved, will strengthen civilian political leadership to negotiate favorable conflict resolution.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS	ii
INTRODUCTION	1
CONCLUDING THE WAR IN THE PACIFIC	10
CONCLUDING THE VIETNAM CONFLICT	21
CONCLUDING THE 1991 PERSIAN GULF WAR.....	31
CONCLUSION	43
BIBLIOGRAPHY	51

ACRONYMS

ADP	Army Doctrine Publication
ADRP	Army Doctrine Reference Publication
ARVN	Republic of Vietnam Army
CENTCOM	Central Command
NVA	North Vietnamese Army
SAMS	School of Advanced Military Studies
TRADOC	Training and Doctrine Command
UN	United Nations
U.S.	United States
USMA	United States Military Academy
VC	Vietcong

INTRODUCTION

Political, strategic, and operational decisions and actions are strands of the same rope. When the rope is well-woven and taught, all efforts pull towards a common end state to achieve a set of political objectives. A shared understanding exists between commanders and decision-makers at all levels, and it allows for synergy between efforts. When the rope is frayed and not well-woven, it is relatively weaker compared to a tightly woven well-maintained rope. Commanders and decision-makers pulling on a frayed and loosely woven rope toward set of political objectives are applying military force without a shared understanding, there is less synergy between their efforts, and the rope being pulled in different directions. The temporal and physical advantages gained may not be as great and may impact favorable conflict resolution. To carry the analogy, the distance pulled toward a political objective is different with the same amount of force being applied to each the tightly woven and loosely woven rope. Military thinkers, both in and out of uniform, have placed a great deal of thought and effort in how to best apply force in achieving a set of political goals for centuries. Often political and military leaders begin to understand the true complexities of war after military force is applied. The complex dynamic nature of war and the infinite interactions all influence the final conditions of any conflict. Negotiations to terminate the war are similar to any other set of negotiations, advantage leads to favorable outcomes. Strategic and political relative advantage allows for negotiating strength in realizing favorable terms for war termination and not a single decisive campaign.

In June 2011 General Martin Dempsey, the United States (U.S.) Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) convened a special conference at the United States Military Academy (USMA) at West Point with some of the world's foremost historians. One of General Dempsey's goals was to address a deficiency he identified; the Army did not, "have much in the way of deep thinking about what happens when you get into a fight and how you extradite

yourself from it.”¹ The War Termination project members set out to write a series of short, pointed articles discussing the conditions that allowed the United States of America to terminate its past wars. Shortly thereafter, the General Dempsey turned to another institution within the United States Army, the School for Advanced Military Studies (SAMS), to produce Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations (ULO)*, one of the capstone documents in the U.S. Army’s *Doctrine 2015* initiative. The War Termination Conference proceedings and the re-write to ADP 3-0 are linked in shaping how leaders think about the application of military force. General Dempsey described the efforts as a thread that runs through the Capstone Concept, the Operating Concept, the Leader Development Strategy, and the War Termination Conference which would allow for self-evaluation and how, “we look at ourselves as a profession.”² The team at the War Termination Conference and the team at SAMS working on ADP 3-0 produced work with a synergistic effect. General Dempsey received high quality work that contributed to his effort to allow senior leaders, “...to articulate that which they are doing, that which they need to do, and then to have the civilian leaders with whom they’re interacting understand it.”³ The discourse between civilian and military leadership on why military force must be applied, how military force is being applied to achieve a desired political goal, how the conflict ends, and what follows allows for a tightly woven rope on which all elements of national power can apply force.

The U.S. Army is enjoying perhaps its greatest period of intellectual growth it has ever seen. The ranks are filled with battle tested, proven, and hardened leaders. The U.S. Army’s

¹Mathew Moten, ed., *War Termination: The Proceedings of the War Termination Conference, United States Military Academy West Point* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2010), 2.

²Ibid., 5.

³Ibid.

Doctrine 2015 project produced a series of Army Doctrinal Reference Publications (ADRP) which supported the ADPs, providing depth to the operating concepts and philosophies in the ADPs. The experience and the ability of commanders and staff to exercise the art of command and the science of control gained during the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan allowed for a set of publications that are less prescriptive than previous editions. The philosophy of Mission Command continues to mature in both concept and implementation.⁴ The Army Design Methodology provides planners with a solid and constructive manner in which to frame problems while illustrating for their commanders the complexity within the problem set through discourse.⁵ In a deliberate manner, senior leaders in the U.S. Army are focused on leader development and on how officers think. The United States Army is not on the precipice of decline as seen following other wars, but rather set to experience growth as it embraces its recent experiences, codifies its lessons into doctrine, and capitalizes on lessons learned following other wars. Part of this growth is the focus of the Army to develop a greater capacity in leaders to think and communicate strategically, ensuring a thread that runs from tactical actions to political objectives. ADP 3-0 describes ULO as, “how the U.S. Army seizes, retains, and exploits the initiative to gain and maintain a position of relative advantage in sustained land operations through simultaneous offensive, defensive, and stability or defense support of civil authorities tasks to prevent or deter

⁴“The mission command philosophy of command is one of the foundations of unified land operations. Mission command is the exercise of authority and direction by the commander using mission orders to enable disciplined initiative within the commander’s intent to empower agile and adaptive leaders in the conduct of unified land operations.” Department of the Army Headquarters, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-0, *Mission Command* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 1.

⁵“The Army design methodology is a methodology for applying critical and creative thinking to understand, visualize, and describe unfamiliar problems and approaches to solving them. Army design methodology is an iterative process of understanding and problem framing that uses elements of operational art to conceive and construct an operational approach to solve identified problems. Commanders and their staffs use Army design methodology to assist them with the conceptual aspects of planning.” Department of the Army Headquarters, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 5-0, *The Operations Process* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 7.

conflict, prevail in war, and create the conditions for favorable conflict resolution.”⁶ The concept of relative advantage is introduced in the operating concept in ADP 3-0 but the concept lacks definition and depth in ADRP 3-0. The introduction of the concept of relative advantage is an important cognitive development in U.S. Army doctrine and requires exploration, development, and depth.

The purpose of this monograph is to provide depth to the concept of relative advantage, and is done by exploring how American wars end. This monograph explores the concept with two assertions. The first is from the War Termination Conference, that the conclusion of wars is a negotiated outcome.⁷ The second is that relative advantage is gained through the application of the operational art, strategic campaigns, and political decisions. The purpose of achieving relative advantage is ultimately to provide leverage in conflict resolution on the most favorable terms. War termination is not achieved through a decisive battle but ultimately through negotiations, the nature of which are very complex.

Operational art is defined in ADP 3-0 as the, “pursuit of strategic objectives, in whole or in part, through the arrangement of tactical actions in space, time, and purpose.”⁸ The application of the operational art ultimately contributes to an agreement between belligerents to stop fighting,

⁶Department of the Army Headquarters, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011), 1.

⁷Dr. Spiller lays out six propositions regarding war. “First: Wars are designed not by their extremes but by their limitations...Second: War’s original aims and methods are constantly revised by the stresses and actions of war...Third: [War] can no longer be quarantined from the influences of the world beyond...Fourth: In every war, the aims of all sides, no matter how opposed at the beginning, gradually converge toward an agreement to stop fighting...Fifth: This convergence of aims is not produced on the battlefield alone...Last: Within the conjures of war itself, a war’s terminal campaign exercises the greatest influence over the manner in which it ends and, therefore, is not always a war’s last campaign. This means that the concept of a decisive campaign or victory is of less utility than orthodox military thought has traditionally assumed.” Roger Spiller, “War Termination: Theory and Practice,” in *War Termination: The Proceedings of the War Termination Conference, United States Military Academy West Point*, ed. Mathew Moten (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2010), 8.

⁸Department of the Army Headquarters, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*, 9.

but is not the prime determining factor. Recent American wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have strengthened the claim that the relationship between tactical actions and war termination is not simply linear, but rather complex. Interaction or influence on a center of gravity does not ensure favorable conflict resolution, but it will provide a relative advantage. Effecting a center of gravity will provide a belligerent an opportunity to influence the outcome favorably. Focusing on a center of gravity, especially strategically, discounts the dynamic nature of warfare. It is essential to understand how gaining a relative advantage influences the achievement of strategic objectives and the political decision to enter negotiations for war termination by participants in a conflict. This is important to practitioners of the operational art to enable the formulation of campaigns that account for the complex and dynamic nature of war. Complexity is not new to warfare. As Clausewitz writes on the complex nature of war at the higher levels in *On War*, "...it is only in the highest realms of strategy that intellectual complications and extreme diversity of factors and relationships occur."⁹ General Dempsey's concerns in developing senior leaders are centered on the same complications, diversity of factors, and relationships discussed by Clausewitz.

The concept of relative advantage provides the thread connecting tactical actions, operational goals, strategic objectives, and political aims. The concept accounts for the negotiating process in war termination, and allows commanders to answer the question, "to what point does this military action provide an advantage in ending the conflict?" It also allows commanders to formulate operational approaches that are resilient given the complex and dynamic nature of war without the fixation on a strategic center of gravity. The ability to communicate an advantage gained also allows for the discourse between civilian and military

⁹Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 178.

leadership to articulate what military operations are designed to accomplish what ensure economy of military effort.

There is relatively little written on how wars end compared to how wars begin, although several works have recently been published given the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. *War Termination: The Proceedings of the War Termination Conference United States Military Academy West Point*, edited by the project officer of the proceedings and the then-Deputy Director of the United States Military Academy's History Department, Colonel Matthew Moten, provides half of the impetus for this work. It provides a series of essays by a number of the conference participants. As its title clearly indicates, the subject of each of the essays is the termination of a different war, all but one American. Each essay is pointed in its discussion, with six general propositions presented in the opening essay by Dr. Roger Spiller. One resounding claim is that "In every war, the aims of all sides, no matter how opposed at the beginning, gradually converge toward an agreement to stop fighting."¹⁰ The remaining articles discuss war termination and its place within strategy respective to the conflict.

Gideon Rose's book *How Wars End: Why We Always Fight the Last Battle* examines Presidential decisions and causes the reader to think about war, foreign policy, and international relations while considering future war policy and strategy. It contributes to the development of this monograph by providing an analysis of the political implications of how each war was terminated. Rose argues that leaders "could do better in the future if they forced themselves to think more clearly and plan more carefully."¹¹ His argument is not only related to Clausewitz's claim that the "last step must be considered prior to taking the first," but also mirrors General

¹⁰Spiller, "War Termination: Theory and Practice," 8.

¹¹Gideon Rose, *How Wars End: Why We Always Fight the Last Battle: A History of American Intervention from World War I to Afghanistan* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2010), xi.

Dempsey's comments at the War Termination Conference. Rose evaluates conflicts from World War I through the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars. Rose's work provides a strategic context and succinctly lays out the aims, the concluding conditions, and the political implications for each war.

Adding to Rose's work is likely the widest read piece on war termination, Fred Charles Ikle's *Every War Must End*, and is the intellectual start point for this monograph. Originally published following the Vietnam Conflict, this work provides a discussion on the "intellectual difficulty in connecting military plans with their ultimate purpose."¹² Ikle evaluates the relationship between the soldier and the statesman while discussing circumstances leading to war termination. This important work articulates the inherent tension between what the statesman wants to accomplish and how the soldier wishes to achieve it, how long it should take, and the required means.

Study of three case studies of American wars provides the opportunity for developing the concept of relative advantage, the evaluation of the common thread between tactical actions and the political negotiations to stop fighting, and utility of the concept of relative advantage compared to center of gravity in strategic thinking. With each conflict evaluated, the collective works provide differing conclusions on why each war ended; however, what is largely absent in the current literature is how relative advantage contributed to negotiating war termination and favorable conflict resolution. A goal of this monograph is to begin filling this void.

The first case study examines the war with Japan in World War II. Generally, three reasons dominate the conversation as to why the Japanese surrendered. The first reason is the overwhelming position the U.S. held over Japan militarily through a combination of the island

¹²Fred Charles Iklé, *Every War Must End*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2005), 1.

hoping campaigns, the naval blockade, and the strategic bombing campaign. The second is the use of nuclear bombs and the massive destruction caused to Japan. The third is that the Soviet Union entered the war and Japan feared an occupation which included the Soviets. This case study discusses operational and strategic campaigns which gain relative advantage and cause an adversary to surrender. The case study analyzes relative advantage within a total war framework and the utility of a strategic center of gravity in relation to the concept of relative advantage.¹³

The second case study is the Vietnam War. The American narrative on the ending of Vietnam has taken a shape all its own over the last three decades. One set of arguments is politicians lost the war afterward, that the military did everything asked during the war. Another argument is the war was lost with the execution of the Tet offensive. Lastly, is the claim that the United States abandoned South Vietnam, leaving them to survive on their own as the U.S. withdrew its support. This case study demonstrates gaining relative advantage specifically for negotiations to terminate a conflict in acceptable terms versus most favorable terms. Furthermore, this case discusses the diffusion of military effort away from a single center of gravity to a number of objectives to gain an advantage to end the conflict.¹⁴

¹³Literature on the War in the Pacific Theater focuses on the themes of the Allies action to end the war and the campaigns that precipitated the end of the war, examples being operational reports from MacArthur or Robert O'Neill's, *The Road to Victory: From Pearl Harbor to Okinawa*. Many, as written from an American point of view, focus on the use of the atomic bombs as the primary event that caused the surrender of Japan, e.g. is Wilson Miscamble's. *The Most Controversial Decision: Truman, the Atomic Bombs, and the Defeat of Japan*. While some, like *Downfall* written by Richard Frank debate the necessity of the atomic bomb, others focus on the entry of Russia into the war and the advantages of surrendering to the United States, such as Hasegawa's *Racing the Enemy*. What is absent from the literature is the discussion on the combination of all the themes in totality in providing the United States the relative advantage to favorably conclude the war in the Pacific Theater.

¹⁴Sources on the Vietnam are themed primarily in two ways. The first is how the tactical actions on the ground were correct and that the U.S. strategically lost the war. Graham Cosmas' *MACV the Joint Command in the Years of Withdrawal, 1968-1973* and James Willbanks' *Abandoning Vietnam: How America Left and South Vietnam Lost Its War* proved the most useful. The second focuses on the political aspect of the war. Examples are Gary Hess' *Vietnam: Explaining America's Lost War*. What is missing is a close examination on the application of the operational art to conduct campaigns that met the objectives provided by President Nixon upon taking office.

The third case study is the Persian Gulf War. One point of view is that the coalition achieved exactly what it set out to do within its limited mandate. Another perspective is that the U.S. should have done more to ensure the removal of Saddam Hussein. Yet another is that the U.S. government completely mishandled the cease fire agreement and allowed the region to remain unstable with the conflict essentially unresolved. This case study examines relative advantage in terms of positive and negative strategic outcomes as a result of the execution framework of a broad, large, and diverse coalition. This case study also demonstrates the impact of focusing on an operational center of gravity to accomplish political objectives instead of gaining relative advantage for the purpose of negotiation and highlights the impact of oversimplification of a military solution.¹⁵

Each case study provides examples of operational, strategic, and political decisions and resulting actions, while focusing on the operational art as well as the strategic and political decisions and actions. Each case evaluates how decisions in relation to warfighting and negotiating strength related to war termination, the former being primarily a physical advantage, the latter predominately a temporal advantage. The decision to use force, the waging of war through the application of force, and the achievement of peace is not a not linear undertaking. It is a negotiated process based on the perception of relative advantage as the assertions within this monograph will illustrate. It is critical to recognize that there will not be a masterstroke at the conclusion of a campaign that causes this nation's enemy to sue for peace. Instead, conflicts will end through either a political decision or the negotiation between belligerents. Tactical actions,

¹⁵Surprisingly, the themes of literature on the Persian Gulf War are similar to that of Vietnam. The first theme is on the political and higher strategic aspects of the war, as they do in Gordon, Michael R. *The Generals' War: The Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf* or Rick Atkinson's *Crusade*. Second, the works are themed along the lower operational and tactical execution of the war, as they do in Richard Swain's *"Lucky War": Third Army in Desert Storm* and Stephen Bourque's *Jayhawk!: The VII Corps in the Persian Gulf War*. What is missing the discussion on the how stopping the war when the United States provided the greatest relative advantage, given the conditions, for favorable conflict resolution.

while successfully arranged in time, space, and purpose toward a strategic aim, do not always favorably influence the strategic or political situation. War termination is a product of negotiation, not the product of military effort directed at a single strategic center of gravity or defeat mechanism. Destruction or defeat of a strategic center of gravity may not impact negotiating strength for the purposes of war termination.

Operational art must be applied to gain a relative advantage and strengthen the political negotiating position, rather than to seek victory through a decisive battle. The concept of relative advantage is best suited for strategic thinking within the application of operational art because it accounts for the complex and adaptive nature of war without oversimplifying the nature of the conflict to a strategic center of gravity. The use of the concept of relative advantage in operational approaches allows for a cognitive thread that connects tactical actions, strategic goals, and political aims.

CONCLUDING THE WAR IN THE PACIFIC

Japan's decision to enter into negotiations to stop fighting was not caused by a single event or act. Japan entered into war termination negotiations because they felt that continuing to fight could yield an improved relative advantage. Japan could not strengthen its negotiating position. The Allies gained a position of relative advantage operationally, strategically, and politically to a degree that if Japan continued to fight it would be at the peril of its own existence as a state. Operationally, the Allies achieved superiority with their ground, air, and maritime forces. Through the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose, the Allies gained control of island staging airfields that extended operational reach onto the Japanese home islands with both ground and air forces. The bombardment campaign was further enabled by a naval blockade, both aimed at stripping Japan of its industrial war-making capability while destroying its stores of materiel. Allied naval forces had gained control of the seas thus taking away Japan's

ability to employ a navy and by blockading the Japanese home islands. Seized staging areas and runways provided operational reach to the Japanese home islands. This gave the Allies another strategic advantage with the capability to conduct a fire bombing campaign. The campaigns the resulted with the Allies in a position to invade the home islands of Japan, dominate the seas, and maintain the operational reach to continue the strategic bombing of the home islands. While providing a clear physical advantage, the campaigns did not break the will of the Japanese. The employment of nuclear weapons resulted in a strategic position of relative advantage because it demonstrated to Japan that Allied ground forces were not required to further destroy Japan. Politically, the Allies benefitted when Russia entered the war. This changed the structure and dynamics of the alliances and Japan's strategic position. In negotiating the final surrender, the Allies acquiesced and permitted the Emperor to remain as the Japanese head of state as long as he was willing to be subject to the Allies for purpose of complying with the terms of surrender. The position of relative advantage that the Allies held operationally, strategically, and politically achieved the Allied goals, war termination, and favorable conflict resolution.

The island-hopping campaign in the Pacific achieved more than regaining territory seized by Japan. Each island seized provided the Allies additional port facilities and airfields that incrementally extended their operational reach until it included the home islands of Japan. In his work, *Derailing the Tokyo Express*, Jack Coombe asserts that, "the islands of Palau, Yap, and Ulithi; and the Philippines, [were] all part of a gigantic dagger aimed at the heart of the empire. In the ensuing months of 1943 and 1944, those islands were taken by a combined Central Pacific and southeastern Pacific drive, and the dagger was finally driven home."¹⁶ These staging bases were critical to establishing the operational reach to both bombard and invade the Japanese main

¹⁶Jack D. Coombe, *Derailing the Tokyo Express: The Naval Battles for the Solomon Islands That Sealed Japan's Fate* (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1991), 152.

islands. The United States seized the Philippines during the battle at Leyte Gulf and gained control of the seas. The Japanese were “never again able to seriously challenge American naval supremacy.”¹⁷ The allies gained the critical midway point along the B-29 Superfortress route from the Marianas to Tokyo, which facilitated the strategic bombing of Japanese home islands.¹⁸ Finally, the arrangement of operations enabled Douglas MacArthur to plan the invasion of the Japanese islands.

The execution of the plan for the invasion of Japan is an example of temporal culmination. MacArthur developed a campaign that would bring the “attainment of the assigned objectives by two successive operations, the first to advance our land-based air forces into Southern KYUSHU in order to support the second, a knock-out blow to the enemy's heart in the TOKYO area.”¹⁹ This approach, which would have realized the strategic aims of the campaign, was flawed because it matched Japan’s remaining capabilities and provided them the strength of the defense. In a Japanese war council meeting on June 6, 1945 the council agreed “the army and navy will immediately prepare for a decisive battle on the homeland and will annihilate the attacking enemy forces at points where the attack will be directed.”²⁰ MacArthur’s assessment was that the United States would face twenty-one hostile divisions, with fourteen in the Kanto Plain area.²¹ Japan’s resistance would have undoubtedly been well prepared, and the number of casualties troubled the United States. The prospect of invading Kyushu and Honshu in the face of

¹⁷Robert John O’Neill, *The Road to Victory: From Pearl Harbor to Okinawa* (New York, NY: Osprey, 2011), 215.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 218.

¹⁹D. M. Giangreco, *Hell to Pay Operation Downfall and the Invasion of Japan, 1945-47* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2009), 2.

²⁰Lester Brooks, *Behind Japan’s Surrender: The Secret Struggle That Ended an Empire* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1967), 141.

²¹Giangreco, *Hell to Pay Operation Downfall and the Invasion of Japan, 1945-47*, 2.

Japanese forces many times greater than those on Okinawa imbued with the same fighting spirit dismayed Allied leadership.²² In a temporal sense, the United States reached a culminating point where the continuation of offensive operations required a pause. Time was needed to shift forces from Europe to conduct an invasion of the Japanese home islands. The Japanese felt, “that Americans lacked courage and resolve and would accept a negotiated settlement leaving the Japanese in control of Asia and the western Pacific,” a point of view without merit.²³ The Joint Chiefs of Staff advised the President that the Kyushu invasion was still “the best solution in the circumstances.”²⁴ The Allies’ capability to conduct the invasion increased as forces freed up by the victory against Nazi Germany transited to the Pacific. The Allies held as they waited to realize the cumulative effects of the strategic blockade and bombing campaigns.

Exacted at a price, the Allies completed their arranging operations with Japan holding a temporal political advantage in relation to attrition and casualties. The savagery of the fighting and the fanatical Japanese defense demonstrated the high price the United States would have to pay if an invasion of mainland Japan were ever attempted.²⁵ The arranging operations of the Allies strengthened their position and enabled for further strategic decisions and actions. At the conclusion the campaign, the Japanese military leaders’ “dream of a vast victory parade, with the Emperor on the white charger prancing buoyantly at the head of his conquering troops, had evaporated.”²⁶ Allied arranging operations and seizure of key islands provided a position of relative advantage by gaining the control of islands and the successful naval battles attained

²²Max Hastings, *Retribution: The Battle for Japan, 1944-45* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), 403.

²³Jerome T. Hagen, *War in the Pacific* (Honolulu, HI: Hawaii Pacific University, 2001), 291.

²⁴John Costello, *The Pacific War* (New York, NY: Quill, 1982), 403.

²⁵O’Neill, *The Road to Victory*, 243.

²⁶Brooks, *Behind Japan’s Surrender: The Secret Struggle That Ended an Empire*, 87.

control of the sea lanes approaching the islands. The Allies had achieved their goals in that “Japan [was] to be expelled from the Asiatic mainland and [was] to lose her sea power in the Pacific. Japan [became] once more an island nation. She [was] an island nation near a continent where she has no foothold, and in an ocean which others command.”²⁷ For the Allies to avoid a costly invasion their hopes “rested chiefly upon blockade, incendiary air bombardment and Russian entry into the Japanese war.”²⁸

Strategically the Allies held a position of strength, one that would only become stronger as the campaigns continued. As discussed, the Allies had been able to gain the operational physical advantage through its arranging operations and blockade, even if Japan held a temporal advantage against the invasion of the Japanese home islands. The Allies were poised to execute a strategic bombing campaign that eroded the temporal position of relative advantage and provided options in the future. “American forces could use blockade and massive aerial bombardment to force Japan's capitulation; or, alternatively, an invasion could be launched to take over the country - essentially, attrition or direct action.”²⁹ The latter, as discussed, was the least preferred approach, but was no longer remained the only feasible approach.

The naval blockade was intended to diminish Japan's ability to import the materiel required to support its military and focused first on the Japanese merchant fleet. With the defeat of the Imperial Navy, the Allies cut the islands off from imported raw materials required to sustain the Japanese war effort. Japanese imports dropped by a third in 1944 and in 1945 they essentially reached zero.³⁰ Japan's capacity to only conduct inter-coastal movement between

²⁷Walter Lippmann, *U.S. War Aims* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1944), 101.

²⁸Hastings, *Retribution*, 403.

²⁹Clayton K. S. Chun, *Japan, 1945: From Operation Downfall to Hiroshima and Nagasaki* (New York, NY: Osprey, 2008), 19.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 22.

home islands increased the effect of the strategic bombing campaign aimed at its industrial capacities and stores. In his assessment provided in May of 1945, General MacArthur asserted that Japan's means to continue to fight was beginning to show cracks and basic industries, shipping, and construction were all on the decline.³¹ The blockade gave the Allies a position of physical relative advantage with Japan's waning abilities to generate combat power and sustain its capacity to wage war. This relative advantage was strengthened by a strategic bombing campaign.

The Allies conducted a strategic bombing campaign commencing with raids launched from the Chinese mainland in June 1944. The campaign was extremely difficult to sustain and did not achieve its goals.³² As the Allies successfully gained the required airfields by seizing islands from the Japanese, the campaign focused on the Japanese industrial capacities, soon added cities, introducing the use of incendiary bombs on Japanese population centers. The Twentieth Air Force dropped 93,000 tons of incendiary bombs on 64 cities and destroyed approximately 175 square miles.³³ The conventional and fire-bombing of Japan began to erode the Emperor's resolve, but it was the U.S.'s decision to use of nuclear weapons that clearly demonstrated the United States' ability to destroy Japan without ever setting foot on the home islands.

President Truman decided to authorize the use of nuclear weapons because he was not willing to accept the losses in dead and wounded that would result from an invasion of Japan. Truman's intended to economize "to the maximum extent possible in the loss of American lives.

³¹Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, *Reports of General MacArthur: Prepared by His General Staff* (Washington, DC: U.S. G.P.O, 1966), 666–667.

³²Chun, *Japan, 1945*, 25.

³³Civil Defense Liaison Office, *Fire Effects of Bombing Attacks*, World War II operational documents (Washington, DC: U.S. G.P.O, 1950), 12.

Economy in the use of time and in money cost,” he felt, “[was] comparatively unimportant.”³⁴ President Truman rested his decision on the simple but bloody arithmetic of death, calculating that the bomb “would save many times the number of lives, both American and Japanese, than it would cost.”³⁵ On August 6, 1945 the United States dropped the first of two nuclear weapons on Japan, striking Hiroshima. On August 9, the United States dropped the second on Nagasaki. President Truman suspended the use of nuclear weapons stating that his object was “to save as many American lives as possible” but also held “a humane feeling for the women and children in Japan.”³⁶ Following the employment of two nuclear bombs, President Truman was determined to maintain pressure on Japan. He directed the continuation of conventional bombing between 10 and 14 August killing another 15,000 people.³⁷ Despite the destruction caused by two nuclear bombs, Japan did not break.

The combination of the naval blockade and the bombing campaign gave the Allies a strategic position of relative advantage. While the blockade isolated the home islands of Japan, and the strategic bombing campaign destroyed the Japanese industrial capacities to wage war while terrorizing their population, their greatest effects were lessening the operational temporal advantage Japan felt it had in defending against an invasion. The United States demonstrated it did not need to invade Japan to affect its destruction. Japan had now become the sole focus of Allied military power following Germany's capitulation, which influenced Japan's leaders in Tokyo.³⁸ The strategic position of relative advantage strengthened the Allies' negotiating

³⁴“Memo SM-2141, Entry of the Soviet Union, '76” (Department of Defense, June 14, 1945).

³⁵Costello, *The Pacific War*, 582.

³⁶Harry S. Truman, “Harry S. Truman to Richard Russell, August 9, 1945. Official File, Truman Papers” (Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, n.d.), 197 Misc.

³⁷Hastings, *Retribution*, 507.

³⁸Chun, *Japan, 1945*, 8.

position in two ways. First it mitigated the temporal advantage that Japan felt it held in the execution of an invasion of the home islands. The second was Japan's ability to fight with the loss of the industry and materiel to wage war. But as with any war, the conclusion was political.

Japan, understanding the advantage that Russian neutrality would provide, the Supreme Council of Japan attempted to enter into a treaty with Stalin throughout 1945. Japan hoped that a treaty between Japan and Russia would prevent Soviet entry into the war and induce the Soviet Government to observe a benevolent neutrality toward Japan.³⁹ President Truman was successfully gained a promise from Stalin to join the Pacific effort against Japan no later than August 15, 1945. On August 9 the Soviet government declared war on Japan.⁴⁰ This shattered "the last remaining hope of the Japanese to end the war through Soviet good offices."⁴¹ The Soviet Union's imminent entry into the war meant that the struggle with Imperial Japan would certainly be brought to a conclusion with far fewer dead and maimed Americans. With the prospect of further division of what little remained of Imperial Japan, and considering the best outcome relative to its negotiating strength, Japan decided to quit fighting and surrender directly to the U.S. The Emperor and the Imperial Council accepted the U.S. terms realizing that any attempt to delay would only imperil Japan's final chance to sue for peace.⁴²

Politically, the Japanese were willing to continue to fight, and welcomed an invasion of the home islands. Japan believed they would be able to inflict U.S. heavy casualties, which would strengthen Japan's negotiating position. As discussed, this advantage was eliminated with the isolation of the home islands and the demonstrated ability to destroy Japan at will without risking

³⁹Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, *Reports of General MacArthur*, 684.

⁴⁰Giangreco, *Hell to Pay Operation Downfall and the Invasion of Japan, 1945-47*, 5.

⁴¹Hastings, *Retribution*, 708.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 722.

a single soldier in an amphibious assault. The Allies, specifically the United States, gained a position of relative advantage on two key political points as the Japanese position continued to weaken. The first was regarding the disposition of the Emperor and the continuation of the institution in post-war Japan. The second was the entry of Russia into the war against Japan and the prospect of dividing Japan if Russia was involved in accepting the Japanese surrender and deciding its post-war fate.

Japan felt political pressure as the United States gained both a strategic and operational advantage in the war, but Japan still held to protecting its throne. Japan clung to the deity of the Emperor and strived to ensure survival of the institution. The Emperor's survival remained a pivotal negotiating point as the United States' position continued to strengthen. Japan's will to fight had yet to be completely broken, with the Imperial Council prepared to "fight on if the Allies refused to accede to the Japanese demand regarding the emperor's authority."⁴³ The Supreme Council affirmed that the Japanese Empire planned to "prosecute the war to the end in order to preserve the national polity and protect the Imperial Homeland, thereby securing the foundations for the future development of the race."⁴⁴ Japanese diplomats continued to insist on preservation of the throne as a pre-condition to stop the fighting; anything less amounted to a surrender that Tokyo viewed as "unacceptable."⁴⁵

Japan held to preserving the emperor's prerogatives.⁴⁶ While not fully consistent with the terms of an unconditional surrender, the U.S. looked past the point, simply because it did not matter in the end. The U.S. demanded that the Emperor subject himself to the authority of an

⁴³Hagen, *War in the Pacific*, 99.

⁴⁴Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, *Reports of General MacArthur*, 688.

⁴⁵Costello, *The Pacific War*, 585.

⁴⁶Wilson D. Miscamble, *The Most Controversial Decision: Truman, the Atomic Bombs, and the Defeat of Japan* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 98.

American general, which Japan was willing to do.⁴⁷ "From the moment of surrender," Tokyo was told, "the authority of the Emperor and the Japanese government shall be subject to the Supreme Commander of Allied powers."⁴⁸ The U.S. was concerned that the Japanese armies would not recognize any authority but that of the Emperor. This outweighed the larger question of whether Japan's condition should be accepted in view of the U.S. objectives in the war, as it had the potential to save lives.⁴⁹ Russia's entry into the war pushed Japan to surrender and the United States offered the most favorable terms in regard to post-war Japan. The Emperor felt "the [United States] was approaching this question with favorable intentions."⁵⁰ Surrendering to the United States, after witnessing the partition of Germany, was more advantageous to Japan than waiting and surrendering to both Russia and the United States.

These two points, compromise and alliances, highlight the importance of political considerations and maneuvering in war termination. In regard to compromise, the Allies were able to gain a position of greater relative advantage consistent with the means they were willing to commit both operationally and strategically. The operational and strategic campaigns, tempered by physical risk and temporal willingness to fight, created political and diplomatic conditions to negotiate a compromise and build an alliance that strengthened the United States political position to negotiate the termination of the war in the Pacific theater.

The United States' victory in the Pacific theater in World War II is a case study supporting the assertion that gaining a position of relative political, strategic, and operational advantage is required for war termination. Two of Dr. Spiller propositions described at the War

⁴⁷Ibid., 103.

⁴⁸Costello, *The Pacific War*, 594.

⁴⁹Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, *Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman, and the Surrender of Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 219.

⁵⁰Ibid., 237.

Termination Conference are especially pertinent to the conclusion of the war with Japan. The first asserts that “the aims of all sides, no matter how opposed at the beginning, gradually converge toward an agreement to stop fighting.”⁵¹ Neither Japan nor the Allies achieved their original intended end state. The agreement to stop fighting was reached through political negotiations. Relative advantage provided strength in reconciling each point of contention between involved belligerents. Fred Ikle asserts in his work *Every War Must End* that nations assess the “costs of further fighting and whether these costs would be justified by the prospects of improving the outcome.”⁵² Continuing to fight would have only brought greater peril to Japan and would not have strengthened its position in negotiating the most favorable terms. Dr. Spiller’s states in his second proposition that the “convergence of aims is not produced on the battlefield alone...[but] also from influences well beyond the battlefield.”⁵³ This is supported by the fact that the totality of circumstances - relative political, strategic, and operational disadvantages - brought Japan to finally surrender. Operational victories achieving strategic aims did cause Japan to surrender. Dr. Spiller makes the point that, “the means that the concept of a decisive victory is of less utility than orthodox military thought has traditionally assumed.”⁵⁴ There were in fact plenty of decisive operational victories achieved by the Allies. Strategically, a single campaign did not bring Japan to its knees through the interaction on a single center of gravity. The negotiated war termination in the Pacific theater was different from the original stated political outcomes and was not singularly realized by attaining a strategic goal in part or whole through the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose. Threads of relative

⁵¹Spiller, “War Termination: Theory and Practice,” 8.

⁵²Iklé, *Every War Must End*, 14.

⁵³Spiller, “War Termination: Theory and Practice,” 8.

⁵⁴Ibid.

advantage connected the tactical actions to strategic goals and political aims. Each successful operation and each strategic goal achieved provided leverage in causing Japan to accept the Allies' terms. War termination in the Pacific theater was realized due to the political, strategic, and operational positions of relative advantage and a negotiated agreement to stop fighting.

CONCLUDING THE VIETNAM CONFLICT

The Vietnam conflict provides an interesting case study for evaluating the establishment of relative advantage for war termination. When President Nixon assumed office in 1969, he set out to make good on one of his campaign promises: conclude the Vietnam Conflict and do so with the honor of the United States intact, which he termed "peace with honor." The stated political and strategic goals of the United States were "to assist the Government of Vietnam and its armed forces to defeat externally directed and supported communist subversion and aggression and maintain an independent non-communist. . . South Vietnam functioning in a secure environment."⁵⁵ As the conflict moved toward its conclusion, decisions and actions were aimed at the goal of causing North Vietnam to agree to a cease fire, allowing the U.S. to leave. End state conditions could be characterized as "acceptable" instead of "favorable" as the U.S. looked for a large enough window to allow redeployment. The position of relative advantage that the United States sought to gain in concluding the Vietnam conflict was not for negotiating between the belligerents involved in a classical sense. It was to cause belligerents involved to agree to allow the U.S. to extricate itself from the region. The U.S. designed operations primarily to increase pressure on North Vietnam to stop fighting the U.S., not to stop the pursuit of communist goals.

Beginning in the latter half of 1968, the operational approach to enable war termination, developed by General Creighton Abrams, supported three primary aims which were focused on

⁵⁵Graham A. Cosmas, *MACV the Joint Command in the Years of Withdrawal, 1968-1973* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 2006), 1.

removing the U.S. from Indochina. The first campaign was one aimed at advising and supporting the South Vietnamese. The second was aimed at pacification of Vietcong guerrillas. The third intended to disrupt North Vietnamese staging areas and lines of communication. The U.S. used a robust strategic bombing campaign to target sanctuaries in Laos and Cambodia, high traffic areas of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, garrison locations within North Vietnam, and Hanoi itself. Strategic bombing pressured North Vietnam to continue its participation in the Paris peace talks and finally accept a cease fire. Additionally, the U.S. provided billions of dollars in military aid to bolster the capabilities of South Vietnam's military through the Enhance and Enhance Plus programs.⁵⁶ Politically, the U.S. brought North Vietnam to the sign the Paris Peace Accord through an indirect approach, leveraging its improved relationship with the USSR and China, both looking to normalize relationships with the United States. The U.S. maintained Saigon's willingness to sign the cease fire through by threatening to negotiate bilaterally with North Vietnam and by providing a large amount of equipment through Enhance and Enhance Plus. The relative advantage gained operationally, strategically, and politically resulted in North Vietnam and South Vietnam signing a cease-fire agreement. This allowed the U.S. to terminate its military involvement in the region. Strategically, the U.S. gained advantage by interacting and influencing several points instead of focusing on a single center of gravity.

The ultimate objective of the Vietnamization program was to strengthen the armed forces of South Vietnam and bolster the Thieu government. The U.S. developed this approach to provide South Vietnamese the capability to stand alone against its Communist opponents. Although the Tet Offensive was a strategic success for the North Vietnamese, it created an operational opportunity due to the heavy losses inflicted on the Vietcong (VC) insurgents. The

⁵⁶Enhance and Enhance Plus were programs where the United States provided equipment to the Republic of Vietnam in an attempt to build their military capabilities and allow the withdraw of U.S. forces.

Vietnamization program was designed as a three phase operation. The first phase was to transfer the responsibility of the ground combat to the Republic of Vietnam's forces. General Abrams' "take and hold" strategy emphasized securing hamlets and protecting the rural population. No longer were American and South Vietnamese troops leaving the scenes of battle and allowing communist forces to return. Instead they worked to hold areas cleared of VC captured in battles. This led to an expanded pacification program, which finally addressed the need for winning the "hearts-and-minds" of the peasantry.⁵⁷ The second phase was the building of South Vietnam's military capacities through an advisory mission. The U.S. developed programs to increase South Vietnam's capabilities to execute their own air, naval, and logistical support. The third phase reduced the American presence to a strictly military advisory role, with a small security element remaining for protection. The intent was for the advisory effort to dwindle as South Vietnam grew in strength. Reduction in forces would continue as the Republic of Vietnam Army's (ARVN) capabilities increased until such American military presence was no longer required.⁵⁸ This approach would allow for the objective of South Vietnam's survival and would also allow for the primary goal of removing the U.S. military presence from Vietnam."⁵⁹

Placing a greater emphasis on pacification provided an advantage and forced the North Vietnamese to change their approach. In his work *The Vietnam War Files: Uncovering the Secret History of Nixon-Era Strategy*, Jeffrey Kimball interviewed the Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach. In the interview, Thach related that North Vietnam, "made a mistake in 1968 and 1969. We regarded Tet as a big success, so we thought we could continue that strategy

⁵⁷Gary R. Hess, *Vietnam: Explaining America's Lost War* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2009), 186.

⁵⁸James H. Willbanks, *Abandoning Vietnam: How America Left and South Vietnam Lost Its War* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 22.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 13.

through '68 into '69. But we did not see that the Americans had changed their strategy. So, we continued to hit towns and cities while the Americans went for pacification. So, we had big losses.”⁶⁰ The centerpiece of the Accelerated Pacification Campaign was the Phoenix Program which, “combined military operations with civilian programs in an effort to cut the Vietcong (VC) from its base of support. The Vietcong had operated ‘shadow governments’ in hundreds of villages and had drawn upon its largely uncontested strength in many areas to sustain its guerrilla operations...the Phoenix Program disrupted that infrastructure by ‘neutralizing’ the VC leadership.”⁶¹ The pacification program provided an operational advantage to the United States. It caused the North Vietnamese to move away from irregular warfare as it effectively eliminated the Vietcong insurgent infrastructure.⁶² North Vietnam changed its approach and increased its conventional operations with North Vietnamese Army (NVA) regulars. North Vietnam perceived that they were gaining a relative advantage as U.S. conventional units began to withdraw from Vietnam and advisor numbers increased in the ARVN units.⁶³ North Vietnam developed an approach to “defeat the enemy's ‘Vietnamization’ policy and his scheme to bring the war to a conclusion from a position of strength, to force the United States to withdraw its troops, to force the collapse of the puppet regime, and to move ahead to secure a decisive victory.”⁶⁴ The United States and the ARVN forces conducted two major operations focused on multiples objectives to counter the communist approach.

⁶⁰Jeffrey P. Kimball, *The Vietnam War Files: Uncovering the Secret History of Nixon-Era Strategy* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 235.

⁶¹Hess, *Vietnam*, 187.

⁶²Lewis Sorley, *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam* (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace, 1999), 147.

⁶³Willbanks, *Abandoning Vietnam*, 33.

⁶⁴Merle Pribbenow, tran., *Victory in Vietnam: The Official History of the People's Army of Vietnam, 1954--1975: The Military History Institute of Vietnam* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 240.

The United States assisted the Republic of Vietnam forces in conducting two offensive operations into Cambodia and another into Laos to stymie the communist conventional forces in their staging bases. An increase in North Vietnamese reliance on regular forces provided two opportunities for the United States. The first opportunity highlighted increased ARVN capabilities, the second allowed the U.S. to severely affect the communist lines of communications and staging areas. General Abrams, knowing that South Vietnam would have to soon defend itself without U.S. assistance, felt that “the sooner they learned how to do that, the better.”⁶⁵ The incursion into Cambodia was a combined operation consisting of 19,000 U.S. troops and 29,000 ARVN troops. The operation was a resounding success, netting over 9,300 tons of communist materiel and having a greater effect than just the 11,000 communist casualties.⁶⁶ In the end, the operation provided a relative advantage for the U.S. The interruption in the NVA’s preparations provided time for the United States to continue to withdraw forces and shift combat responsibilities to the ARVN.⁶⁷ The operation into Cambodia increased the U.S.’s confidence in the ARVN capabilities and increased the U.S.’s desire to showcase ARVN abilities in a more independent operation into Laos.

The operation into Laos in 1970 proved to be tactically disastrous, and highlighted the comparative lack of capacity between U.S. forces and the ARVN forces. Because the operation was conducted at a scope beyond its capacity, ARVN leaders at all levels were not capable of grasping the challenges of the invasion.⁶⁸ But regardless of the struggles of the ARVN leadership, the NVA paid a huge price, with nearly 16 of the 33 maneuver battalions and nearly

⁶⁵Sorley, *A Better War*, 190.

⁶⁶Tran Dinh Tho, *Cambodian Incursion*, Indochina Monographs (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1979), 172.

⁶⁷Sorley, *A Better War*, 213.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 258.

7,000 crew and individual weapons destroyed.⁶⁹ The impact was felt by the communist leaders in Hanoi, who realized that they would only be able to reunite Vietnam under a communist banner without the presence of the United States. This provided a strategic relative advantage for the United States in displaying to North Vietnam that only after a cease fire where the United States left Vietnam would they be able to achieve their aims.

The communists made another attempt to use conventional forces during the Easter Offensive. North Vietnam developed and executed an approach to “launch large offensive campaigns using our main force units in the important strategic theaters. We would simultaneously mount wide-ranging military attacks coordinated with mass popular uprisings aimed at destroying the enemy's ‘pacification’ program in the rural lowlands.”⁷⁰ The NVA, outfitted with modern weapons such as the T-54 tank, the 130-mm gun, the 3AM-2 and SA-7 anti-aircraft missiles, and the AT-3 anti-tank missile, attacked through the narrow demilitarized zone in an attempt to prove that the “Vietnamization” program was a failure in advising the ARVN forces.⁷¹ Staggered at first, the ARVN forces with the support from their advisors and U.S. airpower was able to halt the offensive. The Easter Offensive did not necessarily bring a physical advantage to the U.S. or South Vietnam to bring the North Vietnamese to agree to a cease fire. Instead, it affirmed that the U.S. held a temporal advantage. As long the U.S. remained in the South Vietnam, the communists would not be successful in achieving their goals. Additionally, the Easter Offensive increased the sense of urgency for the Nixon administration to bring the North Vietnamese to the negotiating table and provided enough domestic credibility for

⁶⁹Ibid., 261.

⁷⁰Merle Pribbenow, *Victory in Vietnam*, 290.

⁷¹Duy Hinh Nguyễn, *Vietnamization and the Cease-Fire*, Indochina monographs (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1980), 108.

the Vietnamization program to further pursue negotiations.⁷²

Any strategic relative advantage gained brought and kept North and South Vietnam at the negotiating table. In regard to South Vietnam, the U.S. transferred equipment and facilities to South Vietnam and bolster their capabilities. Enhance Plus was a program that shifted the fielding of equipment from other U.S. allies to South Vietnam with the intent of essentially completing the Vietnamization process.⁷³ While the program provided over \$20 billion worth of equipment and gave South Vietnam the world's fourth largest air force, the infusion of equipment did not result in an increase in South Vietnam's overall fighting capabilities. The equipment exceeded the technical proficiency and logistical infrastructure of the Republic of Vietnam's military, and in the end saddled South Vietnam "with a war machine whose maintenance was far beyond its means."⁷⁴ The U.S. did not execute the program specifically to ensure the survival of the Republic of Vietnam after the United States left. The program provided leverage to keep South Vietnam at the negotiating table in Paris.

A series of back-and-forth disruptions, where either North or South Vietnam refused to continue negotiations, led to a decision by President Nixon to conduct a 12-day strategic bombing campaign focused on Hanoi and North Vietnamese garrisons for a period of twelve days starting December 18, 1972. Anxiety continued to rise as the United States deduced that "if Hanoi did not soon accept our proposals the new Congress would force us to settle on worse terms."⁷⁵ The bombing campaign, officially called Linebacker II but which came to be known as the Christmas bombings, had its desired tactical effect and caused heavy attrition of the communist forces

⁷²Henry Kissinger, *The White House Years* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1979), 276.

⁷³Willbanks, *Abandoning Vietnam*, 174.

⁷⁴Rose, *How Wars End*, 189.

⁷⁵Henry Kissinger, *Ending the Vietnam War* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2003), 301.

garrisoned in North Vietnam.⁷⁶ This allowed for a relative advantage not just physically but temporally. The U.S. intent was not only to achieve military objectives, but to intimidate North Vietnam and force diplomatic concessions.⁷⁷ It strengthened the U.S. position by displaying President Nixon's willingness to absorb the domestic political criticism to force Hanoi to conclude the cease fire talks in Paris.⁷⁸ The strategic bombing campaign had a profound effect, causing the Hanoi to "reverse virtually overnight their bargaining position at the Paris talks."⁷⁹ Leadership in Hanoi, knowing that any effort to reunite Vietnam would only take place after the U.S. forces departed, returned to the talks. The Paris Peace Accords were signed on January 27, 1973 and retained "the demilitarized zone, the retention of the Thieu government, and the clearing up of the misunderstanding about the functions of the national council of national reconciliation and concord to the satisfaction of Saigon."⁸⁰ As a matter of epilogue, U.S. forces completed its withdraw, leaving the Republic of Vietnam in what could be argued as the best military position possible to fight for its own survival. Aid was basically halted in 1974 by the U.S. Congress with Saigon falling shortly thereafter in 1975.

A discussion on the negotiation process in Paris exceeds the scope of this monograph, but one point must be presented in relation to concluding the conflict and negotiation. The U.S. was willing to make a concession and politically compromise on reciprocal withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces consistent with the U.S. drawdown. While this concession is argued by some as merely putting onto paper the truth on the ground, it is an example of the converging desires of

⁷⁶Merle Pribbenow, *Victory in Vietnam*, 300.

⁷⁷Hess, *Vietnam*, 180.

⁷⁸Rose, *How Wars End*, 184.

⁷⁹Douglas E. Pike, "North Vietnamese Air Defenses During the Vietnam War," in *Looking Back on the Vietnam War*, ed. William Head and Lawrence E. Grinter (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993), 171.

⁸⁰Denis Ashton Warner, *Certain Victory: How Hanoi Won the War* (Kansas City, KS: Sheed Andrews and McNeel, 1978), 178.

both the U.S. and North Vietnam. The U.S. gained by being able to extract itself from the conflict. North Vietnam gained by the ability to end the conflict on its terms after the U.S. left. For both North Vietnam and the U.S., the negotiation allowed each to move towards favorable conflict resolution, albeit toward divergent end state conditions. The third party in the negotiations, the Republic of Vietnam was at a disadvantage and essentially powerless in the process. The United States threatened to enter into a bi-lateral agreement with the communists, regardless of South Vietnam's position.⁸¹

With President Nixon taking office, and the change in strategy to extradite the United States from South Vietnam, the advisory and the pacification programs both increased the relative advantage for the United States to bring North and South Vietnam to agree to a cease fire. Republic of Vietnam forces beat back communist attacks during the Easter Offensive while increasing their effectiveness throughout the countryside. Conversely, North Vietnam realized the difficulty in reuniting all of Vietnam as long as the United States continued to support Saigon. The case study provides an example of the arrangement of tactical, operational, and strategic decisions and actions with the purpose of gaining a position of relative advantage to support favorable conflict resolution. President Nixon put forth six goals in his strategy:

1. Reverse the "Americanization" of the war that had occurred from 1965 to 1968 and concentrate instead on Vietnamization.
2. Give more priority to pacification so that the South Vietnamese could be better able to extend their control over the countryside.
3. Reduce the invasion threat by destroying enemy sanctuaries and supply lines in Cambodia and Laos.

⁸¹Sorley, *A Better War*, 352.

4. Withdraw the half million American troops from Vietnam in a way that would not bring collapse in the South.
5. Negotiate a cease-fire and a peace treaty.
6. Demonstrate our willingness and determination to stand by our ally if the peace agreement was violated by Hanoi, and assure South Vietnam that it would continue to receive our military aid as Hanoi did from its allies, the Soviet Union and, to a lesser extent, China.⁸²

The Vietnamization approach, the offensives into Cambodia and Laos, strategic bombing, and the Enhance programs all supported the first four the first four political goals. This allowed for attaining a position of relative advantage to achieve the fifth. The domestic political situation in the United States doomed continued military aid to the Republic of Vietnam. This was exacerbated by the corruption within South Vietnam's political and military structure and was further compounded by either an unwillingness or inability for Saigon to restructure its military to fight within its means.⁸³ Political compromise and coercion with both North and South Vietnam worked affected the negotiations, which did result in the United States extrajudging itself from the conflict.

This case study demonstrates how the application of the operational art focused on a center of gravity to conclude a conflict may prove problematic when forming a strategy as opposed to gaining a position of relative advantage. The United States was focused concluding the conflict and achieving "peace with honor," while North Vietnam was focused on reuniting Vietnam under a communist banner. The question then becomes what is the center of gravity when one belligerent wants to stop fighting when their army cannot be defeated or continues to

⁸²Willbanks, *Abandoning Vietnam*, 19.

⁸³*Ibid.*, 202, 207.

have the will to fight? While the argument can be made that the center of gravity for the U.S. shifted to within South Vietnam's military or capital and that North Vietnam was indirectly affecting the will of the U.S. people, this only highlights the problem in the concept of center of gravity in strategic thinking. The structure of the war in Vietnam, the system expanding beyond the region itself was by no means simple. This could be illustrated by attempting to list the agents and their relationships involved in the conflict. There was no single event, when achieved or acted upon that resulted in the conclusion of the conflict. The nature of the conflict changed – it was dynamic and the agents were adaptive. The image of the evacuation of the Embassy in Saigon burns in the collective consciousness of the U.S. as to how the war ended; however, it is perhaps an image of how the war ended for South Vietnam, rather than for the United States.

CONCLUDING THE 1991 PERSIAN GULF WAR

The 1991 Gulf War provides an example where war termination conditions were agreed upon before fighting began for the purposes of forming a coalition against Iraq. The agreement, codified in a United Nations (UN) Resolution, was built upon a set of complex relationships between operational, strategic, and political aims and considerations. The agreement, necessary to form the coalition and made public to keep it together, provided a strategic advantage to Iraq in the end, even though the Iraqi army was largely destroyed. Saddam Hussein realized that he would survive the conflict, and while largely neutered operationally, would be able to extol his survival as having stood up to the United States. Obstacles for the U.S. in ensuring favorable conflict resolution were stemmed from the political constraints to maintain the coalition. While the United States had achieved dominating operational and strategic positions of relative advantage prior to the cease fire, political considerations created an opportunity for Iraq to hold a position of relative strategic strength and ensure regime survival despite internal and external threats.

The planning of Operation Desert Storm is widely regarded as the “coming out party” for graduates of the U.S. Army’s School for Advanced Military Studies (SAMS). A group of four graduates led by Lieutenant Colonel Purvis developed courses of action in the basement of the Saudi Ministry of Defense. The SAMS planners developed an approach where a “ground attack would follow an air campaign,” with the so-called “Jedi Knights” earning a redo on the initial plan. The plan was developed, in their defense, using only the forces available inside the theater and would need to be expanded.⁸⁴ As the SAMS planners refined the plan, they accounted for all capabilities that would eventually become available to Central Command (CENTCOM). The group developed the two-corps option, which was ultimately approved, resourced, and led to the destruction of the Iraqi army in Kuwait. Operation Desert Storm placed the U.S.-led coalition in a position of strength from which it presided over the cease fire talks.

Operationally, the U.S.-led coalition held a dominating position of relative advantage when the terminating negotiations took place. The wide flanking maneuver executed by the XVIII Airborne Corps and the close-in double envelopment executed by the VII Corps led to the physical destruction of much of Iraq’s army. With the Iraqi army dislodged from its positions in Kuwait and lines of communication threatened, it attempted to flee north as the coalition gave pursuit.

The accounts vary in how the “left hook” option was developed; however, there is little variance in the story of result. The Iraqi army in Kuwait built its defense consistent with its two strengths, its infantry dug in and was protected by its engineers.⁸⁵ Iraq’s approach, the only real feasible one given its capabilities, created an opportunity for the United States to capitalize on its

⁸⁴Rick Atkinson, *Crusade* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1993), 108–109.

⁸⁵Kenneth M. Pollack, *Arabs at War: Military Effectiveness, 1948-1991* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 261.

strength: mobility. The result provided the coalition with its strongest negotiating point in ending the conflict, the destruction of Iraqi army in Kuwait. The left hook broke the Iraqi's and after three days, the armored fist of the VII Corps was moving forward quickly. After a fourth day, there would be no more terrain to cover after another day's fighting. The "major Iraqi lines of retreat beyond the Euphrates appeared to be within the grasp of U.S. forces, and these were the focus of attention," as the fighting entered its final day.⁸⁶ With the Iraqi army regular units destroyed or bypassed, the XVIII and VII Corps were poised to converge on the remaining Republican Guard units. The Republican Guard fought a rear guard action and was largely spared.

While the two U.S.-led corps encircled and largely destroyed the Iraqi army, the Arab contingent of the coalition took the lead with liberating Kuwait City. While other forces, namely the U.S. Marines, might have been more capable, the "Kuwaitis would take the lead, with the Arab forces — notably Egyptian armored units — providing additional firepower as needed."⁸⁷ This was an important arrangement of forces as it strengthened the coalition because it gave the Arab members the position of honor to liberate the capitol.

President Bush called for a cease fire "based upon glowing reports of success from the field."⁸⁸ The decision was made after the operational goal of destroying Iraq's offensive capabilities was achieved and was supported by Generals Colin Powell and Norman Schwarzkopf. The decision was made and implemented "before American armor and attack

⁸⁶Richard M. Swain, *"Lucky War": Third Army in Desert Storm* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Press, 1994), 281.

⁸⁷Stephen A. Bourque, *Jayhawk!: The VII Corps in the Persian Gulf War* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2002), 459.

⁸⁸Swain, *"Lucky War": Third Army in Desert Storm*, 279.

helicopters had the chance to truly destroy the Republican Guard.”⁸⁹ .

Without question, the U.S.-led coalition executed swift and lethal tactical actions. Their use of mobility, combined with the lethality of the U.S. tank formations, resulted in an advantage by destroying Iraq’s army, which was the operational center of gravity. The ground campaign was preceded by an air campaign with operational and strategic goals. The robust air campaign operationally targeted Iraqi army formations in Kuwait and strategically targeted the command and control apparatus in Baghdad and the mitigation of Iraq’s SCUD capabilities. The combination of the two had only one shortcoming, its success happened to quickly for CENTCOM to fully grasp. As Robert Scales affirms in his work, *Certain Victory*, “Wars never end cleanly and this one was no exception. The cease-fire occurred more quickly than anyone had expected. The postwar process that had existed only in concept was now imminent.”⁹⁰

Strategically the U.S.-led coalition held the stronger position of relative advantage prior to the cease-fire. Once the cease fire was in place, Iraq manipulated the situation and retained enough of a strategic relative advantage to ensure regime survival which later claimed victory. Contrary to the initial assumptions of the Bush administration, the Kurd and Shia uprisings did not result in Saddam’s ouster despite a successful strategic air campaign, SCUD interdiction campaign, and the operational destruction of Iraq’s army. Coalition airpower dominated the skies and through its deep operations reduced Baghdad’s ability to command and control the actions in Kuwait. Accomplished through targeting of key infrastructure and command and control nodes, this provided a significant relevant advantage operationally in concluding the ground campaign by the physical destruction of the nodes, and strategically by temporally isolating Baghdad from

⁸⁹Bourque, *Jayhawk!*, 397.

⁹⁰Robert H. Scales, *Certain Victory: The U.S. Army in the Gulf War* (Washington, DC: Brassey’s, 1997), 323.

the Iraqi field army in Kuwait. Additionally, the strategic deployment of Patriot Missiles and a SCUD hunting campaign thwarting Iraq's attempt to bring Israel into the conflict and undermine the coalition. Iraq's Ba'ath regime took note of the publicly stated goals and conditions of the coalition and used both to their advantage. Saddam preserved enough combat power, namely much of the Republican Guard, to ensure his ability to remain in power resulting in a frayed conclusion to the conflict.

Operation Desert Storm opened with a strategic air campaign which resulted in the destruction of the Iraqi command net, a majority of the Iraqi army in Kuwait, and severed the logistics and communications lines between Baghdad and Kuwait.⁹¹ The strategic air campaign struck forty-five key targets in the Baghdad area and rendered Hussein regime confused and ignorant of what was happening above them, due to the destruction of the KARI⁹² air defense network.⁹³ The strategic air campaign separated Baghdad from Kuwait physically and interdicted Iraqi transport of supplies and reinforcements into Kuwait.⁹⁴ Additionally, the strategic air campaign destroyed the Iraqi air force, preventing it from coming to the aid of the Hussein regime and its fielded forces in Iraq.⁹⁵ A total of 109,876 sorties over the 43-day war targeted Scuds, airfields, air defenses, electrical power, biological and chemical weapons, headquarters, intelligence assets, communications, the Iraqi army, and oil refining.⁹⁶ The campaign also supported the ground forces in preparing to liberate Kuwait. Of the forty-two Iraqi divisions

⁹¹Robert Michael Citino, *Blitzkrieg to Desert Storm: The Evolution of Operational Warfare* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 289.

⁹²A commonly used code-word for the foreign-built air defense network. It is simply Iraq spelled backwards.

⁹³Richard Hallion, *Storm Over Iraq* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 190.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*

⁹⁵*Ibid.*

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 188.

entrenched in the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations six weeks earlier, only the Medina and Hammurabi divisions possessed enough combat power to threaten the allied attack following the air campaign when the ground offensive started.⁹⁷ These divisions proved to be essential to Saddam Hussein. In his forthcoming campaign against Kurd and Shia uprisings following the defeat in Kuwait, the retention of the two Republican Guard divisions provided the capability for the survival of his regime. Without question, the strategic air campaign placed the U.S.-led coalition in a position of relative advantage both physically with its lethality and depth, and temporally with its ability to strike at the heart of Baghdad. In the end, survival was the most favorable outcome for which Saddam Hussein could hope for after a failed attempt at breaking the coalition arrayed against Iraqi forces holding Kuwait.

Saddam Hussein attempted to split the coalition through a SCUD-missile campaign aimed at bringing Israel into the conflict to counter the coalition's powerful air campaign. Bringing Israel into the conflict would have jeopardized the Arab partnership in the allied coalition and possibly led to a wider conflict with the entire Middle East at war."⁹⁸ The campaign, reminiscent of the "buzz bomb" campaign waged by Germany against Britain, had a similar result in that it failed. By denying Iraq's efforts to cause Israel retaliate against the attacks, the U.S. maintained a position of relative advantage for negotiating a favorable end to the conflict, because the conflict remained regionalized to the Kuwait Theater of Operations. This position of relative advantage was maintained by a robust and comprehensive campaign that included Patriot missiles being deployed to Israel and SCUD-hunting operations, as well as political negotiations between the U.S., coalition members, and Israel. Following a series of attacks, the most lethal hitting Tel Aviv, the U.S. negotiated with Israel directly and offered

⁹⁷Bourque, *Jayhawk!*, 465.

⁹⁸Atkinson, *Crusade*, 85.

additional Patriot batteries and increased the SCUD-hunting campaign in western Iraq in exchange for Israel's restraint.⁹⁹ A Joint Special Operations Task Force comprised of Delta Force operators, supported by Aviation Task Force 160, began infiltrating, "deep into Mesopotamia, focusing on several hundred square miles around in western Iraq code-named Area of Operation Eagle."¹⁰⁰ While the campaign itself resulted in very little in terms of destroyed launchers, it did have the desired effect as the, "the harassment campaign clearly confounded the missile crews."¹⁰¹ With the ability to maintain the coalition throughout the campaign, the U.S. focused on the destruction of the Iraqi army in Kuwait, the prize being the Republican Guard.

As discussed, the "left hook" of the VII and XVIII Corps with supporting air power led to the destruction of much of Iraq's army. Unfortunately, the Iraqi army extradited most of two Republican Guard divisions just as President Bush called for the cease-fire. Iraq retained a large portion of its Republican Guard and secured permission to use helicopters, which shaped the strategic environment and ensured survival of the regime. During the armistice talks at Safwan, General Schwarzkopf consented to helicopter flights by Iraqi officials who claimed the need for an expeditious means of transportation due to bomb damage to roads and bridges caused by coalition air strikes. Instead, helicopter gunships and loyalist ground troops, primarily from the two spared Republican Guard divisions slaughtered hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Shi'ites, including women and children.¹⁰² The forces required to maintain a viable Iraqi state, which was important to the Bush administration, were also capable of continuing the Iraq's more despicable methods of dealing with domestic political opponents.¹⁰³ Strategically Saddam Hussein retained

⁹⁹Ibid., 131.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 178.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 179.

¹⁰²Bourque, *Jayhawk!*, 489.

¹⁰³Swain, *"Lucky War": Third Army in Desert Storm*, 291.

a significant temporal position of relative advantage that prohibited the U.S. to fully realize favorable conflict resolution. In surviving, Saddam stated that the “resistance by the Republican Guard in the closing days of the ground campaign proved that the Coalition was unable to complete the task through physical means alone.”¹⁰⁴ While largely neutered and unable to threaten his neighbors, Saddam held enough strength to retain power which allowed him to proclaim, “They all got together against us and they did not succeed despite what happened. They did not dare attack Baghdad!”¹⁰⁵

The position of relative advantage shifted from the U.S.-led coalition to Iraq at the institution of the cease fire and continued past the negotiations. The ousting of Saddam Hussein, which the Bush administration assumed and hoped would naturally occur after the swift and unquestionable operational defeat in Kuwait, never came to pass. While no match for coalition forces, the Iraqi army was able to stamp down the insurrection that followed the cease fire. The regime in Baghdad retained a temporal advantage by surviving the coalition and then surviving the Kurd and Shia uprisings. The strategic relative advantage that Iraq held was, in retrospect, a foregone conclusion. Conditions and agreements made in forming a coalition, which included Arab counties and mujahedeen from Afghanistan, limited the United States in leading the coalition, intact, up the Tigris and Euphrates River valleys if the conditions warranted.

Politically, the terms of the coalition achieved the overwhelming operational defeat of Iraq and gave Saddam Hussein a relative strategic advantage following the cease fire agreement negotiated in Safwan. Two things, however, undermined the advantage of the coalition as the campaign concluded. First was President Bush’s sensitivity to public perceptions regarding the

¹⁰⁴Kevin M. Woods, *The Mother of All Battles: Saddam Hussein’s Strategic Plan for the Persian Gulf War* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2008), 248.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

televised destruction of the Iraqi army as it fled Kuwait. Political restraints of the coalition and the terms which brought it together restricted continued U.S. presence within the borders of Iraq as the uprisings started. The coalition came together for a very specific purpose in the liberating of Kuwait. The unity created in the accomplishment of this task gave the coalition a certain strength, evident by secret pledges made by Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and even Syria to remain true to the coalition even if Iraq caused the Israelis to act due to the SCUD campaign.¹⁰⁶ However, regardless of the determination of the coalition to liberate Kuwait, the U.S. stated publicly that it would not continue operations deep into Iraq beyond what was necessary to evict Iraqi forces from Kuwait. This restricted the U.S.'s ability to continue if the situation warranted such an advance, but was necessary to reassure coalition partners.

Maintaining the coalition required constant reassurance from the U.S. that it would not expand its goals. Frequent press conferences reinforced this to the American people and the coalition members. The press conferences were, "instrumental in maintaining both the cohesion of the alliance and ensuring that forces in the field were aware of the national command authority's intentions."¹⁰⁷ The strength of the coalition was a weakness for the U.S. Even if intelligence or circumstances warranted the ouster of Saddam, the United States, "would have gone into Iraq alone; most of the coalition would not have followed."¹⁰⁸ This condition should have informed a more thorough understanding of the desired end state conditions. The difficulty existed, as Richard Swain highlights in his work *Lucky War* in that, "What was absent was a clear and common vision of how U.S. forces should be distributed on the ground to facilitate the inevitable transfer of the conflict's focus and energies back to the political arena. All this was

¹⁰⁶Atkinson, *Crusade*, 83.

¹⁰⁷Swain, "*Lucky War*": *Third Army in Desert Storm*, 279.

¹⁰⁸Bourque, *Jayhawk!*, 416.

missing, in part, no doubt, because the end of offensive actions came quicker than anticipated.¹⁰⁹ The decision was simply to “stop.” As Rose asserts in his work *How Wars End*, “the politico-military affairs were less well coordinated than they might have been, with consequences that became apparent only as the war was drawing to a close.”¹¹⁰

During the negotiations, General Schwarzkopf assured the Iraqis that “there will not be one single coalition force member in the recognized borders in Iraq, as soon as, as rapidly as we can get them out.”¹¹¹ This undermined the position of the coalition. The threat of the continued use of force would have provided the U.S. a position of relative advantage “to press for further demands. It might have insisted that the Iraqis reach a new political accommodation with the Shiites and Kurds, or at least not attack them. It might even have pressed for the removal of the Saddam Hussein regime.”¹¹²

The final agreement would be handled by the United Nations, under whose authority the United States and the coalition acted.¹¹³ By leaving the final negotiations to the United Nations, the United States relinquished its authority and power to ensure favorable conflict resolution but retained all the political risk. Saddam Hussein remained in power for the immediate future while George H.W. Bush did not. The administration's more general failure, however, stem from not linking its military operations directly to its political objectives inside Iraq and not planning for a variety of postwar scenarios. The Bush administration assumed that a major military defeat would result in a military coup against Saddam, leaving a powerless and more pragmatic Iraqi regime in

¹⁰⁹Swain, “*Lucky War*”: *Third Army in Desert Storm*, 280.

¹¹⁰Rose, *How Wars End*, 221.

¹¹¹Swain, “*Lucky War*”: *Third Army in Desert Storm*, 285.

¹¹²Michael R. Gordon, *The Generals’ War: The inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1995), 447.

¹¹³Swain, “*Lucky War*”: *Third Army in Desert Storm*, 285.

place.¹¹⁴ The failure, if it is to be called such, is that there was no application of operational art to support the strategy to cause Saddam's ouster. The strategy was one of assumptions and hopes. The thread that connected tactical actions in time space and purpose stopped that the operational center of gravity.

The 1991 Gulf War is a case study that examines the relationship between operational, strategic, and political interaction. There is not another example of a more lethal operational campaign in U.S. Army history. The arrangement of tactical actions in space, time, and purpose with the strategic aims of destroying Iraqi's military and re-establishing the sovereignty of Kuwait is unmatched in terms of effectiveness and lethality. Strategically, the U.S. was able to isolate the conflict and ensure the viability of the coalition. The deployment of Patriot missiles against Iraq's SCUD capability and campaign to interdict the launchers provided a certain strategic advantage, but the U.S. did not look strategically past the liberation of Kuwait. Iraq was able to and retained enough of its Republican Guard to ensure survival of the regime in Baghdad. Additionally, Iraq controlled enough of the narrative to overshadow the operational success of the coalition. Politically, the coalition was an example of the world uniting to defeat evil. But each member of the coalition brought its own restrictions, limitations, and capabilities. The terms that brought the coalition together restricted its ability to exploit the physical advantages gained and limited the scope of the conflict to re-establish the status quo.

The concept of center of gravity operationally allowed for the unity of effort of the coalition to expel Iraq from Kuwait but lacked in connecting operational objectives to political aims and lasting and favorable end state conditions. The simplicity of destroying the Republican Guard to cause the capitulation of Iraqi forces in Kuwait allowed for unity of effort and provided focus for operational commanders. What proved troublesome was answering the question of

¹¹⁴Rose, *How Wars End*, 226.

what the end state conditions were inside Iraq following the near-destruction of the Iraqi army. The difficulty was the articulation of the relationship between the operational center of gravity, the strategic relative advantage, and the political goals. This is not meant to fault the commanders or the planners of the time and only demonstrates the cognitive growth of the concepts within U.S. Army doctrine. The strategic vision provided by President Bush communicated a desire to allow for a coup or Saddam's overthrow, but a strategy to support this political aim was not developed. Much of the strategic guidance President Bush provided was in the form of constraints of undesirable conditions related to the stability of the region, length of the campaign, and having to occupy Iraq. These factors influenced the timing of the decision to stop fighting.

The decision to cease the offensive was made in Washington D.C., and the initial terms of the cease fire were negotiated in a tent in Safwan, Iraq. To a large degree, the former did not influence the latter. President Bush clearly articulated he did not want to destabilize the entire region when ousting Iraq from Kuwait. General Schwarzkopf, empowered as the CENTCOM Commander, was largely concerned with the specific points of the cease fire, not the situation inside Iraq. He focused on the operational accomplishments and prioritized the redeployment of U.S. troops. The Iraqi contingent was concerned with preserving as much military capability as possible to ensure the survival of Saddam Hussein's regime in Baghdad, looking past the events in the tent and toward the strategic impacts following the negotiations. Iraq's desire to strategically widen the conflict quickly turned to the regime's desire to isolate itself, and it demanded that U.S. forces leave Iraq as it had promised to the world. This demand seems laughable given the position of relative advantage gained through the arrangement of tactical actions, but was made possible by the political concerns over ensuring the cohesiveness of the

coalition. For the U.S., as Rose comments, “[the] simplicity of their Kuwait-related goals was matched by the complexity of their Iraq-related goals.”¹¹⁵ President Bush’s decision to stop fighting was made because he felt the United States would gain no greater advantage in relation to his political aims and the perceived favorable conflict resolution at that moment. Developing a thread from the tactical actions in Kuwait to the U.S. political aims in relation to the situation in Iraq may have provided more coherent negotiating points for the cease fire agreement. A clear understanding of the political desires and their relationship to war termination, CENTCOM may have been able to develop comprehensive strategies to connect operational objectives with political aims. With a greater understanding of the complexity inside Iraq, the United States would develop a clearer policy towards Iraq and Saddam Hussein. Following the turbulent end to the Persian Gulf War, the U.S. presence would remain until the decision to remove Saddam by force over a decade later.

CONCLUSION

The United States Army published ADP 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* in 2011. In doing so, it changed its operating concept to include the key evolution of the concept of relative advantage. Gaining a position of relative advantage to ensure favorable conflict resolution continues the cogitative shift from simple task accomplishment to understanding the complex nature of war. It is a holistic approach of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose directed at a strategic goal and gives weight to the idea of true strategic thinking. As Dr. Spiller argued the outcome of a war is a negotiated process where belligerents agree to stop fighting. As conflict ascends from the lowest tactical level to the highest political level, commanders apply military force to gain a relative advantage through deterrence, threat, or violence itself. The three case

¹¹⁵Ibid., 221.

studies demonstrate the U.S. has sought to gain relative advantage, whether for a follow-on operation, a planned shift in a campaign strategy, or war termination. The thread that connects tactics with strategic goals and political aims is the operational art.

The termination of the war with Japan in the Pacific theater highlights Japan's conditional surrender, according to the terms set forth in the Potsdam conference. Japan's decision was precipitated by the realization that continuing to fight would not provide a greater advantage in improving the terms of the surrender. The U.S. accepted the surrender which included the retention of the Emperor because his survival was viewed to provide an advantage favorable to the U.S. concluding the conflict. Several strategic factors precipitated the surrender, none of which were singularly responsible for causing Japan to seek terms to stop fighting. Japan still had, to some degree, the will and means to keep fighting. Ultimately, Japan ceased to fight once it realized that continuing to fight would only imperil its position as Russia marched across Manchuria. Japan actively sought to surrender to the United States to avoid further partition of its territory should the Soviet Union be party to the final negotiation to end the war in the Pacific.

The Vietnam War ended differently, through a cease fire and a negotiated treaty in the framework of a limited war. Following the Tet Offensive, the U.S. developed a strategy to end the war and to achieve the political goals put forth by President Nixon. The U.S. was unable to keep North Vietnam at the negotiation table in Paris with the Vietnamization and the Phoenix programs at their most effective, and the size and capabilities of the South Vietnamese military at their greatest. North Vietnam realized that the strategic bombing, failed NVA invasions, incursions in to Cambodia and Laos by South Vietnam and the U.S., and the continued U.S. presence were all obstacles to a united and communist Vietnam. The cumulative advantage kept North Vietnam at the negotiating table to allow the U.S. the window to extradite the remainder of its forces. President Nixon defined favorable conflict resolution as removal of U.S. forces, which would result in peace for the U.S. The other political aims were secondary, all which would

ensure the nation's honor. The dynamic and complex nature of the conflict highlights the problem of simplifying the solution to a problem where the interaction on a strategic center of gravity. In the case of the Vietnam conflict, there is no value in the exercise of identifying a strategic center of gravity. The concept of relative advantage allows for establishing the thread that connected the operational approaches of Vietnamization, the Phoenix Program, and the operations conducted by South Vietnam to the stated political aims without oversimplifying the a complex problem.

The 1991 Gulf War provides an example of the danger of reducing a complex strategic and political problem to a complicated operational problem. What appeared as a straight-forward and "simple" war turned out to be harshly complex. The U.S.-led coalition achieved their limited strategic goals, but those strategic goals achieved did not mesh with the U.S. political aims and left several desires unfulfilled. The Gulf War highlights the advantages of a broad coalition in terms of legitimacy and the disadvantages of the same in regard to adaptability due to political considerations and international perceptions. The agreements that brought and held the coalition together provided an advantage to both the U.S. and Iraq. With U.S. land forces quickly departing and restrained to territory outside of Iraq, Saddam Hussein quelled the Shia and Kurd uprisings claimed victory. The 1991 Gulf War highlights that if the thread of relative advantage does not connect tactical actions, operations, and a campaign to political objective, negotiating strength is not only weak, but fleeting as well.

The nation's military is entering a new phase in every sense of the doctrinal definition with a change in the environment, task organization with the drawdown, and alignment of tasks with the regional alignment concept and rebalancing to the Pacific. It is essential that the operating concept for the entire Department of Defense adopt the concept of gaining a position of relative of advantage to better link operational objectives to strategic aims and political goals. The United States may not be provided with another opportunity to fight the war with the mismatch

held with Operation Desert Storm. Adversaries of the United States learned as much if not more than the United States did from that conflict. While the Weinberger and Powell doctrines were a necessary and important part of reforming and focusing our military after Vietnam, it is doubtful that the next war that the United States fights will focus on only a single type of warfare. As much as an operational success as Operation Desert Storm was, it was focused at physical defeat mechanisms and discounted the importance the complex relationships and interactions in war. The adaptation of the concept of relative advantage and deepening its relationship to war termination through negotiating a favorable outcome is a critical concept that will allow for accounting of the complex and dynamic nature of war without over simplifying a problem.

The Army Design Methodology can provide a process for developing relative advantage. As a field commander conceptualizes a military problem and develops an operational approach, the concept of relative advantage will allow the commander to develop a temporal connection to a political aim. The interactive and iterative dialogue with commanders connects the thread from tactical actions to political aims. A conversation between senior strategic military leaders and civilian authorities framed within the concept of relative advantage provides for a communicative dialogue, the threads of relative advantage tightly woven. When describing strategic goals achieved by military operations in terms of relative advantage, senior military leaders may more effectively account for the negotiating process and connect strategy with politics. The concept of relative advantage may better close the feedback loop with civilian authorities. A senior military leader providing feedback to civilian authorities in the form relative advantage may be able to describe how the application of military force will generate negotiating strength for favorable conflict resolution.

This monograph attempts to contribute to the discussion on the cogitative growth of doctrine and the application of operational art. The heuristic of a center of gravity is useful in application of the operational art; however, the concept may not strategically capture the entire

problem. Focusing on actions directed at a strategic center of gravity, even with the identification of several, may over-simplify the problem. It may also result in commanders developing military solutions that end at achieving effects on a strategic center of gravity. In strategic thinking, the concept of center of gravity discounts the entirety of the system. Conceptually, visualization of all the agents, their relationships and interactions, and the structure of the problem is lost.

Practitioners of the operational art are charged with deriving simplicity from complexity. The comparison between the concepts of relative advantage and a strategic center of gravity is similar to the comparison between simplicity and complexity. Three theorists speak to complexity in problems. Clausewitz writes “the essential difference is that war is not an exercise of the will directed at inanimate matter, as is the case with the mechanical arts, or at matter which is animate but passive and yielding, as is the case with the human mind and emotion in the fine arts. In war, the will is directed at an animate object that *reacts*.”¹¹⁶ Using contemporary doctrinal parlance, Clausewitz is describing war as a complex, adaptive, and dynamic system. Complex adaptive systems are defined by John Holland as “a dynamic network of many agents acting in parallel, constantly acting and reacting to what other agents are doing.”¹¹⁷ Complexity is irreducible by its very nature and individual actions or events resonate on the system. The problem with deriving simple from the complex in practice is not dissimilar to what John Gaddis writes in *The Landscape of History* when discussing independent variables within the social sciences. He asserts that the basic requirement of any theory is to account for reality. He continues in commenting that reducing history from complex to simple to anticipate the future

¹¹⁶Clausewitz, *On War*, 149.

¹¹⁷A. Bousquet, *The Scientific Way of Warfare*, Columbia/Hurst Series (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2010), 175.

one must oversimplify the past.¹¹⁸ The synthesis of the three points cannot be understated in the application of the operational art. A military problem is part of a complex and adaptive system, and if commanders and staffs oversimplify the military problem in articulation they may change not only their perspective on the problem, but the solution applied to the problem. The solution provided, while effective and well-executed, may not have the desired strategic effect.

With a fuller realization of complexity within war, the concept of center of gravity remains operationally valuable and essential. It allows for commanders to communicate the concentration point for combat power. Strategically, the concept of relative advantage allows the development of campaigns that connect operations to political aims. The concept of relative advantage has more utility than the concept of center of gravity in strategic thinking because it accounts for the complex and dynamic nature of war, the actors, interactions, relationships, and factors, and it does not over-simplify the political problem by focusing on a strategic center of gravity. The concept allows, as a heuristic, for the cognitive connection between tactical actions, operational effects, strategic goals, and political aims. The concept, as a communication tool, allows for communication between senior military leaders and civilian authorities in terms of advantage gained for negotiating purposes.

Dr. Evert Carl Dolman, a professor at the U.S. Air Force's School of Advanced Air and Space Studies and author of the book *Pure Strategy*, describes strategy as an "unending process that can never lead to conclusion...continuation is the goal of strategy, not culmination."¹¹⁹ In writing on complexity and war, Dr. Dolman discusses the ability a strategist must have to think both within the complex system created by war, while also the ability to think how the system

¹¹⁸John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004), 71.

¹¹⁹Everett Carl Dolman, *Pure Strategy: Power And Principle In The Space And Information Age* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2005), 4.

created by war interacts on a larger scale. He discusses the ability for operational planners to determine the aggregate outcome of several battles, while the strategist is able to connect the aggregate outcomes of operations to success, or what he calls “continuing advantage.”¹²⁰ This concept is similar to the concept of relative advantage not only because it links tactical arrangements to strategic goals, but Dr. Dolman’s concept allows for the cognitive extension to political aims. While Dr. Dolman does not discuss at length the relationship between strategic goals to political aims, he does connect a thread from tactical actions to political aims in writing that “the strategic level requirement for war [is] to support policy.”¹²¹ What is important to recognize is that both the U.S. Army’s School for Advanced Military Studies and the U.S. Air Force’s School for Advanced Air and Space Studies both conceptualize similar theories in the connection of tactical actions to strategic goals. The next step requires connecting strategic goals to political aims and clearly communicating how they are interconnected.

The implication is that the Department of Defense, writ large, must integrate the concept of relative advantage and its connection to negotiations for war termination in its strategic thinking. Explicit codification of a joint strategic concept integrated into the Elements of Operational Design will foster the cognitive development of the visualization of a conflict at the beginning of the planning process with full consideration of political aims. As Clausewitz writes, “an isolated advantage in war cannot be assessed separately from the overall result...in war advantages and disadvantages of a single action could only be determined by the final balance.”¹²² Context and political motivations all influence actors that interact within the context of war. The decision to keep fighting individually ends in either victory or death; however, the

¹²⁰Ibid., 102–103.

¹²¹Ibid., 104.

¹²²Clausewitz, *On War*, 182.

decision to stop fighting is not enough. Other belligerents must agree through a negotiated process to stop fighting as well, and each negotiating point is strengthened directly or indirectly by accomplishing a strategic goal, in whole or in part by the arrangement of tactical actions in space, time, and purpose.

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